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ABSTRACT

A study measured the effectiveness of the Channel One news program on student achievement in current events. Data were collected to measure the difference in current events knowledge between those students who viewed and discussed Channel One, and those students who had no access to the program. Data based on gender differences in student achievement was also measured. A 20-item multiple choice pre- and post-test was designed by the researcher and administered to eighth graders (n=78) in an urban high school near Atlanta, Georgia, during winter 2000. A school that contracts with Channel One receives a satellite dish, two videotape recorders for automatic recording of the televised broadcasts, and networked televisions. The daily feed is a 12-minute program, 10 minutes of news and features, and two minutes of advertisements. The contract runs for a 3-year period in which the school promises to show Channel One on 90% of all school days and in 80% of all classrooms. Currently, an estimated 8 million junior and senior high school students representing 12,000 schools view Channel One each day. Appended are: "Memo to Teachers"; "Permission Memo"; "Pre-Test"; "Post-Test." (Contains 3 tables and 33 references.) (Author/BT)

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Commercialism in Public Schools: Focusing on Channel One.

Margaret Putman Aiken

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The committee and the student's Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this study has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty.

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ABSTRACT

COMMERCIALISM IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS:

FOCUSING ON CHANNEL ONE

By

Margaret Putman Aiken

The purpose of this study was to measure the effectiveness of the Channel One news program on student achievement in current events. Data was collected to measure the difference in current events knowledge between those students who viewed and discussed Channel One, and those students who had no access to the program. Data in gender differences in student achievement was also measured. A twenty item multiple choice pre and post test was designed by the researcher and administered to 78 eighth graders during the winter of 2000.

A school that contracts with Channel One receives a satellite dish, two videotape recorders for automatic recording of the televised broadcasts, and networked televisions. The daily feed is a twelve-minute program; ten minutes of news and features, two minutes of advertisements. The contract runs for a three-year period in which the school promises to show Channel One on 90 percent of all school days and in 80 percent of all classrooms. Currently, an estimated eight million junior and senior high school students representing 12,000 schools view Channel One each day.

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Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Specialist in Education in the Department of Middle-Secondary Education and Instructional Technology in the College of Education, Georgia State University

Atlanta, Georgia

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview

The prevalence of commercialism in classrooms has increased over the last decade. It has taken a variety of forms including corporate-sponsored curricular materials, advertising in school hallways and on buses, exclusive beverage contracts between school districts and soft drink companies, and television news programs for students that include advertisements. School districts have had budget cuts making it necessary to look elsewhere for funding for a variety of programs. Fege (1998), former government relations director for the National Parent Teacher Association, has warned that as schools grow more dependent on corporate dollars, the increasing commercialization of schools could gradually shift the notion of what a "public" school really is. Kaplan (1996), an education policy analyst, counters that businesses' interest in schools as markets is legitimate, and the help that many companies have provided to under-equipped schools is nearly always welcome. Kaplan contends that it is the "hard-sell merchants" who try to shape children into rookie consumers who must be watched. Even though opinions differ as to the degree of harm or benefit done to students by commercial presence in schools, educators agree there has been a shift in the frequency and nature of commercial arrangements.

Channel One, a television news program broadcast to schools, has been part of the debate on the intrusion of commercialism into the classroom. The daily news

music and language of their young audience. Whittle Communications sold Channel One to Primedia in 1994, and the Channel One division now represents one of Primedia's most lucrative holdings (Brady, 1999). The number of students viewing Channel One is consistently reported to be eight million in 12,000 middle, junior, and senior high schools. The newscast devotes attention to social issues of interest to its audience, such as teen violence, drugs, health, and the environment. The educational director, Paul Folkemer, has overseen the development of teachers' guides, the Web site and just recently a media literacy curriculum component. In explaining the rush of news magazines to classroom publishing, Manning (2000), a journalist and project fellow at the Open Society Institute, states that Channel One has "ushered in a journalistic revolution -- a wave of marketing branded products (including news) to kids that no news organization would have even considered a decade ago" (Manning, 2000, p. 5).

Statement of the Problem

Because of contractual agreements, Channel One is broadcast daily to students. It is reported in one study, Morgan (1993) that Channel One is more likely to be in poor, urban, and rural schools. If teachers are unprepared to discuss the content of the program, a potential learning opportunity is missed. Given Channel One's presence, how can teachers best use the program to increase student achievement in current events? If students view and discuss the daily news program, does this activity affect their knowledge of current events?

Significance of the Study

If, as the research suggests (Anderman and Johnston, 1998; Johnston, 1995; Tiene, 1993), students' knowledge of current events increases with daily viewing and discussing Channel One news, then classroom teachers will be more likely to see the program as a useful instructional tool. There may be some advantage to shifting the debate from commercialism in schools to how best to take advantage of the opportunities presented by a daily news broadcast, and school-wide video equipment.

Assumptions and Limitations

The assumptions of this research are that the students are representative of the eighth grade class where the study was conducted and that the teachers were consistent in their viewing and discussing habits during the research period.
The research is limited to eighth grade students in one metro Atlanta school district and may not have traits in common with other school districts. The results of the study are limited by the validity of the pre and posttests constructed by the researcher. It is unknown if the tests accurately measured students' knowledge over the testing period. The testing was done during the winter of 2000 and may have been influenced by a delay in post testing due to an ice storm.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used throughout this study. They are defined as follows:

Commercialism in schools is the practice of promoting products and services to students in a school setting.

Channel One is a daily news program broadcast by satellite at 3:30 a.m. Eastern Standard Time every school morning and recorded by video equipment within the school building. The program runs for twelve minutes, ten minutes devoted to news and other topical features and two minutes of advertisements.

Media Literacy broadly defined includes the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and produce information in a variety of forms. "It's the ability to challenge and question, the ability to be conscious about what's going on around us - and not be passive and vulnerable" (Thoman, 1999, p. 51).

Null Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in current events knowledge between students who view and discuss Channel One broadcasts compared to those who do not view the program.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Commercialism in schools has taken many forms. Channel One, a television program produced by Primedia, and media literacy have become important components in the discussion of school commercialization and their effects on students. This literature review considers the definition of commercialism and the pros and cons of commercialism in public schools. Channel One's development and a review of the significant studies that have focused on Channel One are included. Media literacy is an important part in the national debate over commercialization; its role in the curriculum is examined.

Background on Commercialism in Schools

Commercialism in schools can be defined as promoting products and services to students in a school setting. The difference between school-business partnerships and a marketing campaign is that the school-business partnership has "some unique element in it, which is designed to benefit the schools" (*Commercialism in schools*, 1998, p 6).

Consumers' Union, the organization that publishes *Consumer Reports*, has divided commercial activity in schools into four categories. The first is in-school advertising, which includes book covers, logos on buses, scoreboards, and recently, contracts with

beverage companies. Second are classroom magazines and television programs such as Channel One and Weekly Reader. Third are corporate sponsored educational materials and programs, including multi-media teaching kits, posters and teaching aids. Fourth are corporate sponsored contests and incentive programs such as Pizza Hut's BOOK IT! , which rewards reading with free pizza. (*Captive Kids*, 1995)

Consumers' Union has commissioned three studies on commercialism in schools. The first was published in 1990 entitled *Selling America's Kids*. (Selling America's Kids, 1990). The second, *Captive Kids*, was a follow-up completed in 1995 and the third is due in 2000. *Captive Kids* (1995) found a dramatic shift in the frequency and nature of commercial arrangements. In effect, schools were being used as a product to be packaged and sold. Marketers seeking access to students had escalated their efforts. The fastest growing category was exclusive agreements with soda companies.

According to *Captive Kids* (1995), cash-strapped schools needed the added revenue for equipment that was beyond the budget. The cost of instructional materials has continued to increase, which produced a vulnerability to marketers. Children represented a large and growing market. McNeal (1998) explained that all consumer goods are targeted to children as either a primary market, an influence on parental purchases, or as future consumers. According to McNeal, kids aged four to twelve spend money from allowances, gifts, and work. They were described as targets of marketers because they influenced purchases made by parents. About 90 percent of product requests made by children to their parents were by brand name (McNeal,

1998). Children have indirect influence over an additional $300 billion in purchases, ranging from restaurant suggestions to which automobile to buy (1998).

Businesses want to win kids early, so when they become adult consumers, they will remain loyal to a brand. Brand awareness and corporate image have become increasingly important for marketers to reinforce. Advertisers are interested in the opportunity to market to students in a new setting. Profit, not education, is their priority (*Commercialism*, 1999).

Educators described commercialism as a means to an end, not desirable in and of itself. The debate over commercialism would not exist if schools were not underfunded. Since schools seem unable to secure adequate funding through traditional means, educators made the case for commercialism as follows: " (a) sponsored programs and advertising provide schools with materials and financial support; (b) commercialism is everywhere, there is no reason to believe that kids are influenced by the additional ads they see in school; (c) teachers are capable of evaluating materials for commercial bias and using materials in an appropriate way; (d) it presents an opportunity to teach media literacy; (e) businesses have unique information and resources that can improve students' education; (f) problems with sponsored materials are exaggerated" (*Captive Kids*, 1995, p. 31).

Commercialism opponents have said that schools should be preparing students to make their own choices, not influencing them to follow the path advocated by marketers. The list against commercialism was presented as: " (a) cedes control to people outside education; (b) compromises the integrity of education; (c) corrupts the curricula; (d) blurs line between fact and opinion; (e) ads in school and in school

materials carry the weight of an endorsement from a trusted institution; (f) schools are producing brand loyal consumers" (*Captive Kids*, 1995, p. 32).

According to Robelen (1998), an education issues analyst for the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), the strongest opponents of all forms of commercialism in U.S. schools were the National Education Association (NEA), National Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). Robelen (1998) quoted several educators on the subject of commercialism in schools. Resnick, Associate Executive Director of National School Boards Association, said that school officials considering commercial arrangements should ask themselves, "Are you truly getting value for it? Have you examined it thoroughly from an education perspective? The arrangement must not send the wrong message, waste time, or distract from the schools' education mission" (Robelen,1998, p.7). Chong, president of the Seattle Council of Parent Teacher Student Association, argued that commercialism is a very complex issue. Fund-raisers and other activities, such as selling candy bars for uniforms, are examples of this complexity. Chong's district has formed an advisory committee on advertising composed of educators, parents, business people, and students that are assigned the task of developing policy recommendations for the school board. (Robelen, 1998)

Kaplan (1996), an education policy analyst, wrote that the real mission for teachers, parents, and officials is to reaffirm what democracy and civic life are all about and to make sure that message reaches students in the classroom. The key part of that message is that "we must above all be responsible citizens and not gluttonous,

unthinking consumers." (Kaplan, 1996, p.12) Ultimately, parents have the best chance of keeping commercialism in perspective and having their values prevail.

What impact does commercialism have on students and the curriculum? Molnar, the department chair of the School of Education University of Wisconsin, has written extensively about commercialism's effect in schools. Molnar (1996) mentioned that children are taught in health class not to eat fatty foods or drink caffeine, and simultaneously the school enters into contracts with Taco Bell and Pepsi to provide cafeteria service. It has become implicit that the school endorses the product. Molnar was a participant in the recent symposium on Channel One in public schools and spoke forcefully against the program.

Channel One

In 1989, Christopher Whittle, a communications entrepreneur, started a pilot program in six schools testing the idea of a mix of news, current events, and technology. Whittle pledged to produce a "broadcast that would bolster the cultural literacy of the nation's students. Many kids think Chernobyl is Cher's full name" (Toch, 1992, p. 1). Nineteen ninety nine marked the tenth anniversary of Channel One.

A school that contracts with Channel One receives a satellite dish, two videotape recorders for automatic recording of the televised broadcasts, and networked televisions - one television for every 23 students. The automated daily feed is picked up by satellite dishes between 3:30 a.m. and 5:30 a.m. Eastern Standard Time and recorded by the master video cassette recorder. Teachers and administrators can preview the programs. The daily feed is a 12-minute program, ten minutes of news and features, two minutes of advertisements. A school signs a three-year contract in

which it promises to show Channel One on 90 percent of all school days and in 80 percent of all classrooms. The equipment is on loan for the life of the contract. Schools may air the show at any time during the school day.

In the early years, Channel One studies (Toch, 1992) found students did not like the programming and were not paying much attention when it was broadcast. A shift in programming began in 1991. The production facilities were moved from New York to Hollywood and David Neuman, a Hollywood producer, was put in charge. He dismissed many of the seasoned journalists and replaced them with young actors and high-school students as news anchors. They used the language and music of their young audience. A new emphasis on style was introduced. The released staffers suggested that the unspoken message was that "Channel One was doomed as a business if we didn't add style" (Toch, 1992, p. 3). Jerry Liddell, the former producer, stated they were trying to find a balance between keeping the students attention and the "need to inform." He stated this was not unique to Channel One; the major networks do the same every day. Educators were presented with the ethical problem of whether the benefits derived by schools justified the commercial marketing of Channel One to a captive audience of students, especially in light of the substantial profits made by Channel One. In addition to the captive audience issue, educators raised the issue of instructional time lost at students' expense.

Channel One became a "gold mine, for both Whittle and for its advertisers, who are offered a unique combination of category exclusivity, target marketing, positive editorial environment, and captive audience"(DeVaney, 1994, p. 131). The latest figures show that Channel One is in 12,000 schools, and is viewed in 350,000

classrooms in grades six to twelve, five days a week. Whittle Communications was purchased in 1994 by K-III Communications, owned by Kohlberg, Kravis, and Roberts. The name was changed to Primedia. A press release (Metrock) dated January 1999, stated that the educational division of Primedia is predicting a strong quarter, with a "sold out" position for Channel One and promised expansion into 1,000 more schools over the next three years.

Major corporations line up to advertise on Channel One. They pay an estimated $185,000 per spot (Toch, 1992) for the hard-to-reach audience that Channel One delivers to them every day. Corporations complained about the long-term, inflexible contracts demanded originally from Whittle Communications, but only two advertisers dropped out, Gillette and Nike. Whittle Communications realized their unique responsibility to the teenage audience early in their marketing strategy to school board officials. They issued standards for their advertisers to follow:

A. Include a balanced representation of individuals for a variety of social, racial, ethnic, or gender groups.
B. Provide positive role models for all members of the viewing audience.
C. Include and portray individuals with physical and mental impairments.
D. Place an emphasis on the importance of education and remaining in school.
E. Communicate strong messages against all forms of antisocial behavior, including drug use, violence and prejudice. (Devaney, 1994, p. 151)

Despite these standards, there is a debate over Channel One's existence in the public school setting. The following studies have looked at the questions of who is watching Channel One and what effect does the program have on students.

Research on Channel One

Many studies over the past ten years have focused on the effect of Channel One on student knowledge of current events and the effect of advertising on students'

buying habits (Anderman & Johnston, 1998; Greenberg & Brand, 1993b; Johnston, 1995; Tiene, 1993).

Johnston (1995) found that the highest level of learning was associated with high grade-point averages, being male, and being motivated to learn about what's happening in the world. Disappointing was the fact that "C" and "D" students learned very little, even in exemplary schools. Students most receptive to learning from the news program learned more when the teacher discussed the news on a regular basis. The study found teachers and principals were supportive of the package of benefits and viewed video technology positively. "But as good as the technology may be, to achieve maximum benefits for students teachers need to help them understand the day's news" (Johnston, 1995, p. 441). This finding was common among all studies.

Morgan (1993), at the University of Massachusetts/Amherst, conducted a comprehensive study on what kinds of schools, in what kinds of communities chose to receive Channel One. The study offered a comparative profile of those schools. It should be noted that the study was funded by UNPLUG, an affiliate of Commercial Free Education, Inc., and there was no statistical analysis included in the article. Morgan compared approximately 17,000 public schools that do and do not receive Channel One. The most "glaring discrepancies revolve around class, income and race." (Morgan, 1993, p. 9) Schools with the greatest concentration of low-income students were twice as likely (37.7 percent verses 16.6 percent) to have Channel One. The schools that spent the least amount of money on instructional materials were over three times as likely to have Channel One. Morgan stated the "particularly disturbing" fact that Channel One is more often shown to students who are least likely to be able

to buy all the products and thereby increase their alienation and frustration. Morgan also found that Channel One is more likely to be in South Atlantic, South Central, and Mountain States, as compared with New England and Pacific states.

Looking past the demographics, Tiene (1993) addressed the educational effects of the Channel One. Tiene looked at four midwestern junior high schools over two weeks, not long enough to view changes over time. A twenty-seven-item quiz was developed based on material seen on Channel One. This quiz, not included in the article, compared results from 303 viewers verses 216 nonviewers. The students who watched Channel One scored higher on current events (60 percent verses 52 percent). The eight percent difference, the same as found by Johnston, may not be as important as "increasing teenagers' interest in what's happening around the world" (Tiene, 1993, p. 47), encouraging discussion and further investigation about news events. A teacher survey of attitudes was included in this study. In general the teachers liked the Channel One news program and thought the stories covered were appropriate. They thought the "human interest" segments were of value and did not object to the advertisements.

It was concluded that Channel One "positions a school to exploit the video revolution. If there are trade-offs to allowing commercialism in the public schools, perhaps public discussion should shift to how to take advantage of opportunities provided" (Tiene, 1993, p. 51).

Anderman and Johnston (1998) conducted a quantitative study on television news in the classroom. This study reported that the context in which news programs were viewed and discussed had an important effect on how much students learn from news broadcasts. In a survey of 582 students it was found that instructional practices that

encourage students to seek news outside of school led to greater current events knowledge. The use of some instructional practices, such as memorizing news events for quizzes, had a negative impact on learning. Nostram and Gierok (1994) found a similar result from a survey of seven school districts in Wisconsin. The conclusion that the classroom setting and following discussions were critical to learning from television news, were the same as the Anderman and Johnston study.

In Barrett's (1995) qualitative study of Channel One, conducted over a sixteen-month period in eight schools in Florida and Massachusetts, the author concluded that the program was most appropriate for the middle school age group. " The advantage of viewing Channel One was in students heightened interest in current events, geography, and pop quizzes" (Barrett, 1995, p. 30). The disadvantages appeared to be lack of integration into the curriculum, superficial programming, and intrusion into the school day. Further, Barrett made some recommendations to schools considering contracting with Channel One. Some of those recommendations were: (a) encourage teachers (especially English and social studies) to develop curriculum units for critical viewing of television news programs and commercials; (b) administrators should ensure that the equipment is used more extensively and creatively, since the main rationale for contracting with Channel One was the equipment; and (c) school district leadership should develop assessment and evaluation procedures for Channel One's use and its effectiveness. During Barrett's observations, only limited use of the equipment beyond daily news broadcasts was found.

Tiene and Whitmore (1995) discussed different information on the use of the television equipment (excluding daily viewing of Channel One news). In a utilization

survey of 200 randomly selected Midwest junior and senior high schools, 83 percent indicated increased use of educational television, namely Channel One Connection, since subscribing to Channel One. The programming for Channel One Connection was provided by the tape library of Pacific Mountain Network and consisted of previously aired Public Broadcasting Service programs. The most commonly used programs were in social studies and science (Tiene & Whitmore, 1995).

Greenberg and Brand (1993a) focused their investigation on the two minutes of advertising broadcast by Channel One. Their study surveyed viewers and nonviewers of Channel One in two pairs of high schools matched on income, racial composition, state testing scores, per-pupil expenditures, population density, and student-teacher ratios. They found a statistical difference suggesting that Channel One viewers developed more materialistic attitudes than nonviewers. Overall, viewers thought more highly of products advertised on the program and indicated stronger intentions to purchase those brands. However, there was no difference between the groups when asked if products had recently been purchased. The study concludes that a curriculum component that included Channel One commercials could reverse advertisement's impact. A suggested curriculum might include lessons on "advertising's selling intent, the technical ways in which ads improve a product's image, the use of celebrity endorsements, emotional appeals, premium appeals, targeting strategies" (Greenberg & Brand, 1993b, p. 47). The introduction of a curriculum component would bring media literacy into the schools.

Media Literacy

What is media literacy? In 1992 conferees at the Annenberg School for Communication agreed on this definition: "Media literacy is the ability to choose, to

understand, to question, to evaluate, to create and/or produce and to respond thoughtfully to the media we consume . . ." (Megee, 1997, p. 23).

Media educator, Thoman, wrote, "media literacy is not just being critical of the media; it's learning to appreciate the power of the most powerful medium that the world has ever known" (1999, p. 50). It is recommended that media literacy be an extension of traditional literacy, to be integrated into each of the disciplines now taught – language arts, social studies, mathematics, and other curriculum areas. "We should be helping students analyze what they see and hear, what they believe, and how they interact with others . . . media literacy is not so much a finite body of knowledge as a skill, a process, a way of thinking that, like reading comprehension, is always evolving" (Thoman,1999, p. 51). Few deny the power of advertising to influence students. Students must learn to interpret media messages and therefore make responsible decisions about their media choices. Almost everything they read, see, and hear has a sales message somewhere in it (Day, 1999).

In a highly technical world with information saturation, students must learn how to discern messages. They need skills to critically analyze and evaluate information. Words and images combine to create messages. Teachers want students to be able to critically analyze, evaluate information, verify and validate the information, and to access alternative points of view from a range of sources (Considine & Haley, 1999). Schools in the United States have historically taken a protectionist approach to the media. If we do not let our students see, or hear objectionable material, such media will not influence them. As McBrien (1999) stated this may have worked earlier but is now impossible to enforce. "The student who is safest from unsavory messages is the student

who is educated about them and can assess and evaluate for him or herself" (McBrien, 1999, p. 2).

Five ideas should be known about media messages, regardless of the method of delivery (Thoman, 1999). First, they were constructed. Certain pictures or text were selected, others rejected. Nothing appears by accident in a media text. Students begin to understand this when they make their own media productions. Second, techniques used are identifiable. Certain camera angles, music, special effects, layout design are designed to grab attention and heighten responses. Third, media are businesses and therefore are driven by the profit motive. Viewers are sold to advertisers. Satisfaction is derived by having the newest, latest, and best. Fourth, people experience the same message differently. Parents and children view the same television show differently. Asking questions about what is happening helps to accept or reject messages. Who is represented? Who is left out? Fifth, media have certain points-of-view embedded. They present ideologies and the values of the person "constructing" the message (Thoman, 1999).

Media literate viewers should ask some basic questions. Who created this message and why? What techniques are being used to attract my attention? What lifestyles, values, and points-of-view are represented? What is omitted from this message? By studying media messages, students come to recognize that all media presentations are creations designed for a particular effect. Students learn to distance themselves from the message when they deconstruct it.

Owen (1998) suggested three principles that need to be understood before teaching students. First, most students have preconceived viewing habits that lead them to

believe that television is essentially just entertainment. Second, students must change viewing habits to become critical viewers. Third, if students develop active, critical viewing habits, they will understand the breadth and subtlety of television's power and its serious cultural consequences for all of us.

Megee (1997) discussed exemplary models of schools that demonstrate effective media-literacy efforts. For example, in an English classroom the students are reading *Catcher in the Rye* and viewing videotapes of My So-Called Life, and The Wonder Years, examining them as "texts" (1997, p. 34). "We are talking about protagonist, antagonist, setting, conflict and plot development. The skills are the same; it's just a different medium" (p. 34). A seventh grade student involved in producing a daily newscast explained, "We learn how to watch TV, how to analyze it, how to produce a show" (p. 35). This example of student-produced shows is mentioned frequently as an effective method of media instruction. Singer and Singer (1998) conducted research that supported teaching students to understand television yields a more critical, intelligent viewer. Further they lamented that a body of literature "encompassing empirical studies on media literacy is lacking" (Singer & Singer, 1998, p. 175). Evidence is needed for administrators to evaluate the importance of media literacy integration into the curriculum.

Summary

It is clear that commercial interests have made dramatic inroads into our public schools over the last decade. This has taken many forms, one of which is Channel One. Research supports that when Channel One is shown in a classroom setting and is

combined with teacher lead discussion, students are learning. This study will measure the degree of learning by comparing student achievement between two student groups.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study was conducted to measure the effectiveness of the Channel One news program on student achievement in current events. The school system's district office and the Institutional Review Board at Georgia State University granted permission to conduct the study. The participating teachers were contacted in the fall of 1999 and agreed to the time frame set forth in the project. The population was 78 eighth grade students of an urban high school near Atlanta, Georgia. These students represented four classes of the eighth grade students.

Population Description

The district where the research was conducted has a total student enrollment of approximately 87,000 students in 107 schools. There are ten high schools. The subject high school has an enrollment of approximately 1500 students in grades eight through twelve. The racial makeup of the school population is 3.6 percent white, 92.7 percent black, and 3.6 percent other. The number of students eligible for free or reduced lunch is 46.3 percent (Milliron & Prodigo-Herrmann, 1998). The community has an average per capita income of $13,956 and an average household income of $20,279 (Zipcode Source Book, 1999). The survey population was believed to be

homogenous and representative of the eighth grade class. Each of the four participating classes was randomly assigned to be viewing and discussing the Channel One program or not viewing the program.

Instrumentation

I sought permission to conduct testing of the students from the Principal and participating teachers. (See Appendix A) The teachers were selected based on an expressed interest in the research. Student permission was not solicited because the testing was part of ongoing curriculum activities.

The pretest of twenty multiple-choice questions was given to all students for a baseline of current events knowledge. Current events knowledge at each testing was defined as the total of correct responses on the test. The students were instructed to put a number on their test and identify themselves as male or female. The pretest was given after a two-week holiday break and constructed of national and world news events as the research suggested (Anderman & Johnson, 1998). Forty students viewed and discussed Channel One for a two-week period; thirty-eight were in the non-viewing group and had no access to the program. The viewing group included discussion of the news program immediately after the daily noon showing.

A second twenty item multiple-choice test was given to measure the effect of viewing and discussing Channel One on current events knowledge. In developing the posttest, care was given to include only items covered by Channel One and other national news sources, such as network television and national news magazines.

The tests were scored using the SPSS (SPSS for Windows, 9.0) computer program that generated frequency and percentage information allowing data to be analyzed. The pretest and posttest are included in appendices C and D.

Data Analysis

The tests were collected and matched for corresponding pre and posttest numbers. The researcher started with a population of 108 students and reduced the number to 78. The remaining 78 students were present for both test dates and successfully completed the multiple-choice questions. The tests were entered into a computer and analyzed using SPSS for Microsoft Windows, 9.0. The data was verified to ensure accuracy. The Educational Research Bureau of Georgia State University provided assistance in analyzing the resulting data.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This study was conducted to determine if viewing and discussing the Channel One news program affects current events knowledge in students. The survey population included seventy-eight eighth grade students, forty in the viewing group and thirty-eight in the non-viewing group. Thirty-seven students were male, and forty-one were female. The tables below show the following reports:

1. Comparison of mean score of viewing and non-viewing students.
2. *T*-test comparison of viewing and non-viewing students.
3. Mean and standard deviation by gender.

Table 1

Mean and Standard Deviation by Viewing (with discussion) and Non-Viewing Classes

View		Pre-Test	Post-Test
No	Mean	10.71	10.87
	N	38	38
	Std. Deviation	3.22	2.51
Yes	Mean	10.68	13.00
	N	40	40
	Std. Deviation	2.59	2.73
Total	Mean	10.69	11.96
	N	78	78
	Std. Deviation	2.89	2.82

When the t-test was run on the mean scores of the two groups, one viewing and discussing and one not viewing, the t-statistic was –5.111 and the probability was .000. As described in the table below, the difference between the mean scores was statistically significant (t (39) = -5.111, p< .000). An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests.

Table 2

T-test Comparison of Viewing (with discussion) and Non-Viewing

View			*t*	df	Sig
No	Pair 1	Pre/Post	-.287	37	.776
Yes	Pair 1	Pre/Post	-5.111	39	.000

The results permitted rejection of the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant increase in current events achievement between students who view and discuss Channel One and those who do not view.

When data was broken down by gender, females from the viewing group made the greatest gain in scores between the pre and posttests. The male viewing group also made gains. The female non-viewing group had a drop in scores from the pretest and posttest. Table 3 illustrates the mean scores by gender.

Table 3

Mean and Standard Deviation by Gender

Gender	View		Pre-Test	Post-Test
Male	No	Mean	9.89	11.32
		N	19	19
		Std. Deviation	2.33	2.38
	Yes	Mean	10.89	12.94
		N	18	18
		Std. Deviation	3.05	2.15
	Total	Mean	10.38	12.11
		N	37	37
		Std. Deviation	2.71	2.39
Female	No	Mean	11.53	10.42
		N	19	19
		Std. Deviation	3.81	2.61
	Yes	Mean	10.50	13.05
		N	22	22
		Std. Deviation	2.20	3.17
	Total	Mean	10.98	11.83
		N	41	41
		Std. Deviation	3.05	3.18

Summary

The mean score of the viewing and discussing group for the posttest was 13.00 as compared with the non-viewing group's posttest score of 10.87. The only group with a decline in mean scores was the female non-viewing group, 11.53 pre test to 10.42

posttest. In contrast the female viewing group made the greatest gain in mean scores, 10.50 pre test to 13.05 post test. The t-test on the mean scores resulted in a statistically significant difference between the viewing and discussing group and the non-viewing group.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research was conducted to determine the effect of Channel One news on student achievement in current events knowledge. The population examined was chosen at random from an eighth grade class at an Atlanta area urban high school where the researcher is the librarian/media specialist. Statistical data was also collected regarding achievement by gender.

The *t*-test comparison presented in Table 2 indicates a significant statistical difference in the current events knowledge of those students who viewed and discussed the Channel One news program and those who did not view and discuss the program. This data gives the researcher a case to build before the faculty of the value of discussion of the Channel One news program, since the viewing time is already present during the school day. A presentation of the data, along with ideas of how to incorporate current events into the curriculum, is a good starting point for discussion of Channel One's implications for the success of students.

This study supports other published research relating to current events knowledge and the link to Channel One (Anderman & Johnston, 1998; Johnston, 1995; Tiene, 1993). It is clear that with a classroom setting and the addition of discussion along with viewing, Channel One provides teachers with a means to

increase students' current events knowledge and by extension their knowledge of the world around them.

Media literacy, the ability to analyze, evaluate, and interpret media messages, is an important component of this knowledge and should be part of the classroom discussion. The opportunity for learning about media literacy would be enhanced by a daily news program, produced and edited by students. This would also improve the use of the video package provided as part of the Channel One contract. Another use of the equipment would be to build a curriculum-based library of videos provided by Public Broadcasting Service in agreement with Channel One Connection.

For broader application and replication of this study, a larger population, drawn from a wider age group could be examined. As reported by Barrett (1995), the middle school student seems most attuned to the Channel One program. A larger sample group would allow a degree of generalization and the age span, possibly 7th through 9th grade, would allow an observation of achievement related to age.

Second, the testing could be conducted over a longer period of time. This would increase the accuracy of the data on current events achievement and retention of material. A third suggestion is to expand the research on media literacy in part to remedy the commercial pressures on students. This would include how to integrate media literacy into the school curriculum, complete with lesson plans for teachers. Fourth, participating teachers should be given guidelines on the style and length of discussions to use when viewing Channel One. This effort might affect the reliability of the data in a positive manner.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

MEMO TO TEACHERS

January 13, 2000

To: Eighth Grade Teachers

From: Margaret Aiken

Re: Channel One Research

Would you be willing to help me with a research question regarding Channel One? I plan to give two multiple choice tests on current events in an effort to measure the effect of viewing or not viewing Channel One. The pre-test would be given Wednesday during fourth period. The post test would be given two weeks later.

Each student will be assigned a number, there will be no names included on scoring sheets. I will be looking at achievement from one test to the next. I hope to be in and out of your classes quickly.

APPENDIX B

PERMISSION MEMO

December 13, 1999

To: Dr. Janet Warren

From: Margaret Aiken
Librarian/Media Specialist

Re: Research for Education Specialist paper

Enclosed you will find a sample of the multiple choice test I plan to give four eighth grade classes. This test will be followed by a similar test two weeks later. I want to measure the current events knowledge of our students, with one group viewing and discussing Channel One, and the other group not viewing. I am working with Don Siegel in Georgia State University's Educational Research Bureau.

I have enlisted the help of four eighth grade teachers who have expressed interest in the effect of Channel One. I have promised to be in and out of their classes quickly. I have included my Review of Literature paper.

Thank you

APPENDIX C

January 2000

(PRE)CURRENT EVENTS TEST

MULTIPLE CHOICE: Fill in the correct circle:

1. John Rocker is in the news because:
   - A. He is in trouble with Macon police O
   - B. He made racial slurs in a Sports Illustrated interview O
   - C. He failed to save the Braves in the World Series O

2. Indian Airlines was in the news because:
   - A. They award the most Frequent Flyer miles O
   - B. Their plane was hijacked Christmas day O
   - C. They had the most passenger last year O

3. The leading Republican candidate for the Presidential nomination is:
   - A. Al Gore O
   - B. John McCain O
   - C. George Bush Jr. O

4. The leading Democratic candidate for the Presidential nomination is:
   - A. George Bush Jr. O
   - B. Bill Bradley O
   - C. Al Gore O

5. Name the six year old Cuban boy in the news:
   - A. Juan Rodriguez O
   - B. Elian Gonzalez O
   - C. Fidel Castro O

6. Boris Yeltsin is in the news because:
   - A. He resigned his presidency O
   - B. He visited Washington O
   - C. He is best friends with Bill Clinton O

7. Name the Time Magazine Man of the Century:
   - A. William Jefferson Clinton O
   - B. Adolf Hitler O
   - C. Albert Einstein O

8. Y2K stands for:
   - A. Computer problem recognizing year 2000 O
   - B. The millennium O
   - C. A rap group O

9. Hilary Clinton is running for:
   A. First Lady O
   B. The Senate from New York O
   C. The Senate from Arkansas O

10. The Middle East peace talks are between:
   A. Israel and Washington O
   B. Palestine and United States O
   C. Syria and Israel O

11. "E" commerce means:
   A. Easy profits O
   B. Business done over the internet O
   C. Electron particles O

12. The worse school shooting in American history took place in:
   A. Hope Arkansas O
   B. Eugene Oregon O
   C. Littleton Colorado O

13. What federal agency recently had trouble with the Mars Polar Landing:
   A. NASA O
   B. FICA O
   C. IRS O

14. Which Beatle was recently stabbed in his own home:
   A. Ringo Starr O
   B. Paul McCartney O
   C. George Harrison O

15. On December 31, 1999 the Panama Canal's administration was turned over to:
   A. Panama O
   B. Miami O
   C. Washington O

16. Ted Turner and Jane Fonda recently announced:
   A. A new line of exercise equipment O
   B. Their separation O
   C. Purchase of a new house O

17. The Russian army is fighting in:
   A. Turkey O
   B. Chechnya O
   C. Norway O

18. Name the state that is being boycotted over their flag:
   A. South Carolina O
   B. Alabama O
   C. Mississippi O

19. Name the first new game show to become popular:
    A. Magic Hour O
    B. Dating Game O
    C. Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? O

20. CDC's doctors develop a new vaccine each year against what:
    A. Hepatitis O
    B. sore throat O
    C. flu O

APPENDIX D
January 2000

(POST) CURRENT EVENTS TEST

MULTIPLE CHOICE: Fill in the correct circle:

1. John Rocker is in the news because:
   - A. He was suspended from baseball until May O
   - B. He lives in Macon O
   - C. He failed to save the Braves in the World Series O

2. Hillary Clinton is running for the Senate from:
   - A. New York O
   - B. Arkansas O
   - C. Chicago O

3. The big winner in New Hampshire republican primary was:
   - A. Steve Forbes O
   - B. John McCain O
   - C. Gary Bauer O

4. The leading Democratic candidate for the presidential nomination is:
   - A. George Bush Jr. O
   - B. Bill Bradley O
   - C. Al Gore O

5. Elian Gonzalez was visited by:
   - A. His father O
   - B. His grandmothers O
   - C. His friend O

6. The race in the South Carolina republican primary is between:
   - A. George W. Bush Jr vs Steve Forbes O
   - B. Steve Forbes vs Gary Bauer O
   - C. George W. Bush Jr. vs John McCain O

7. The mission for the shuttle Endeavor is:
   - A. To map the earth's surface O
   - B. To land on Pluto O
   - C. To circle the moon O

8. The fighting continues in the Russian province of:
   - A. Georgia O
   - B. Chechnya O
   - C. Moscow O

9. Computer hackers have caused:
   A. Popular web sites to be unavailable O
   B. A change in the weather O
   C. Lost of credit O

10. Name the airline that had a plane crash in the Pacific ocean:
   A. Delta O
   B. United O
   C. Alaska Airlines O

11. The NFL Super Bowl 34 winner was:
   A. Tennessee Titans O
   B. St. Louis Rams O
   C. Atlanta Falcons O

12. The NFL star who died as the result of a car crash was:
   A. Derrick Thomas O
   B. Deon Sanders O
   C. Emmett Smith O

13. Steve Forbes' tax plan is known as:
   A. Property tax O
   B. Flat tax O
   C. Income tax break O

14. Which European country has elected a new government:
   A. Austria O
   B. France O
   C. England O

15. To vote in the presidential election you must be:
   A. Eighteen O
   B. U. S. citizen O
   C. Both A and B O

16. Name the new term created as a result of internet hackers:
   A. Traffic terror O
   B. Denial of Service O
   C. Unavoidable delay O

17. Name the state whose flag remains a controversial subject:
   A. Ohio O
   B. New Hampshire O
   C. South Carolina

18. The unemployment rate announced in January was:
   A. Higher than usual O
   B. Lowest in three decades O
   C. 20% O

19. Name the agency responsible for the Endeavor mission:
    A. CDC O
    B. FEMA O
    C. NASA O

20. Companies want to advertise during the Super Bowl because:
    A. Ads reach approximately 125 million viewers O
    B. Football is fun O
    C. Football fans buy new products O

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